4: Hobley G-S (ca. 1908) 1908 FL.11 Lua FL.11



Their huts are very similar to those of the Bantu Kavirondo, but they are a little lower, and are generally built solely of reeds (*makuti*). The huts are dug out inside to a depth of 18 inches or 2 feet; the soil is plastered with the earth dug out from the interior.

There are two fire-places in each hut, and the customs previously enumerated about stopping at the first or second cooking place are the same as among the Bantu Kavirondo.

Young girls sleep in a hut with the other girls of the village in the care of an old woman. The boys of the village sleep in a hut by themselves. The villages are roughly circular. The huts are not arranged in any particular order, but the huts of one man are generally side by side. The huts of the young men are usually near the gates, and they are supposed to watch the gates in case of any attempt being made to steal the cattle.

On entering a village the hut directly opposite the gate is generally the hut of the principal wife of the headman of the village, or the headman of that part of the village.

*Food products.*—Millets, sweet potatoes, a little cassada, Indian corn, and also pumpkins, onions, and pulse (*pepi*). Bananas are occasionally grown, but they do not flourish, as the country is a little too dry for them. A little tobacco and Indian hemp are grown. The Indian corn is not ground but generally eaten in an unripe state.

*Ironwork.*—They do not smelt iron, neither do they forge their iron, which are all imported from Samia. They however forge spears, knives, hill hoes, axes, etc., from Samia iron. Among the Gani tribe only people belonging to a clan called Uvira forge iron; the smiths are called Tchan-di. A rough kind of salt is made from the ashes of reeds and grass, and salt is also imported from Kisiqisi.

*Death customs.*—When a person dies the body is immediately taken out of the house. Upon the death of a woman the brothers-in-law of the deceased dig the grave in the verandah of the house of the deceased; the corpse is buried on its left side with the head under the head; the body is doubled up. A man, on the contrary, is buried on his right side with the head under the head. In the case of a woman her relations and friends come and wail; her husband presents each clan that attends with a goat, the mourners stay three days.

The hut in which a person has died is used for a month; the neighbours then meet and drink *tembo*, and the house is broken down. Upon the death of a man his brother digs his grave; if the first wife he married is still alive he is buried in her house; if she is dead the man is buried in the verandah of the hut in which he died.

Men only wail for one day, after that only women wail; the women wail for the whole of the first three days; after that the women of the village wail at dawn for fifteen days.

*Signs of mourning.*—Women wear a string of banana fibre round the forehead, they also wear a tail of white strings for about a month; the tail usually

10: Rhodes M-9 (ca. 1900)1913
FL11 Luo FL11



butter being used for cooking a special meal which is eaten by the owner of the cow and his wife; a little of the butter is set aside and they smear it on their lips, but some of it may be smeared on their bodies. After the meal has been eaten, the cow is milked regularly and the milk may now be drunk by all the family. 234

**Oxen used for riding.** Oxen are frequently used for riding. The young men train the animals to this and ride them constantly. They turn them as they wish by prodding the side of the animal's cheek with a stick from which it turns away. The animals are trained, however, to obey the voice rather than wait for the stick. They trot along at a fast rate and cover the ground quicker than a man can walk. 442

**Sheep and goats.** Sheep and goats are kept by all villagers. Goats especially are eaten by men and women without any restrictions. Fowls are also kept, though, as is usual among most African tribes, fowls have to find their own food, and their chickens are constantly preyed upon by hawks and kites, and those that grow up are of a poor and miserable kind. 231 262

*Building.*

**Architecture and mode of building.** The houses are round huts with central thatched roofs. They have an outer wall of stakes three and sometimes four feet high with mud smeared over them on the inside and a central pole passing through the roof, to which the rafters are attached. The roof is thatched with grass and the end of the central pole, which passes through the roof, is rudely carved. The houses are grouped together, leaving room enough to pass between them, and a growing fence surrounds them. Many villages have no outer fence, but are built high up the hill-sides for protection from hostile clans. 342 341

*Religion.*

**Religious beliefs.** Apart from worship of the dead and a belief in ghosts, the people have little religion. They call the supreme being Nyasi, who, they say, is to be found in large trees. In times of trouble or sickness they make offerings to him of an animal which is killed under a large tree, and the [771] 776 782

14: Johnston G-4, 5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Lue FL11



(6) inhabited Northern Unyoro (where a fragment of them remains), and that
794 the Bahima and their Bantu subjects drove this branch of the Nilotic people across the Albert Nile to the north-west (where they remain as the Alurs) and into Busoga (across the Victoria Nile) on the south-east. From Busoga they appear to have been driven on by the Bantu right through the Kavirondo country until they finally settled and throve round the shores of Kavirondo Bay, where they at present bear the name of Ja-luo or Nyiffes. It is a remarkable fact that the Ja-luo to this day are

[501]

407. A RAFT RACE OF PAPYRUS REEDING, VICTORIA NILE

called by their Bantu neighbours "Abanyoro," which would indicate that this theory of their origin is correct.

361 The Ja-luo reside in fixed villages of from ten to fifty huts, which are
[178] surrounded by hedges of aloe and euphorbia. Formerly they built mud or stone walls round their settlements in imitation of the Bantu Kavirondo to the north. But this is a custom which has now died out. The houses
[342] are similar in appearance to those of the Bantu tribes around them, as is the arrangement about the two fireplaces. Young unmarried girls usually
513 sleep together in one large hut under the care of an old woman. The
882 young men and boys of the village also sleep by themselves, generally

17: Southall E-5 (1946-1947) 1953 FL11 Loan FL11



originate all the larger lineages which provide the political framework of Luo society.

My illustrations of Luo lineage structure are taken from material on one large lineage group, that of Kanchieng'o. This group inhabits the present locations of Kanchieng'o and Kanjipel, and in 1947 had a population of 30,000. I lived here from December 1946 till March 1947 and again for the month of September 1947. On each occasion I took with me a Luo student from Makerere College as interpreter and research assistant. I went through my material with a dozen or more of the Luo students at Makerere who themselves came from a number of different locations. Clearly, from such a short period in the field, my results are not complete, but in so far as they add to the information at present available, I present them for what they are worth. The map (Fig. 1) shows all the Luo locations of South Kavirondo, those of the Kanchieng'o group and of the other lineages which claim descent from the common ancestress, Jok and his wife Awando, being shown in heavy type.

## III. THE FAMILY

Two most prominent cultural features of the Luo landscape are the euphorbia hedges, at stages of growth varying from that of 3-foot saplings to that of 30-foot trees, dating each site by their planting at the time of first occupation, and throwing a thick green wall round the cluster of huts within. This residential unit is the *dala* or *pamba*, and will be referred to as the homestead. The dwelling-huts ranged in a circle round the inside of the hedge are those of married women, the chief wife's hut being at the side opposite to the entrance through the hedge, and the huts of subsequent wives arranged in alternate succession on either side of that of the chief wife.[1] The husband and head of the homestead divides his time between the huts of his wives, the chief wife's hut taking precedence,[2] having no other quarters of his own except an *ohala*, a smaller hut usually in the centre of the circle, which was his only place of privacy. There is a belief that if the husband leaves the homestead to escape from the bickering of his wives he will die on re-entering it, and the *ohala* provides him with a safer sanctuary. It was also a vantage point from which he could keep a watchful eye on his cattle in the nearby kraal. The homestead is the special correlate of the compound polygynous family and is subdivided into the households of its component elementary families. Just as *dala* or *pamba* applies both figuratively to the social group and concretely to the homestead occupied by it, so *ot* applies both to house and to the household of wife and children occupying it. The title of the head of the homestead and its family group is *nyako dala* or *nyako pamba*; *jadong'* (elder) may be substituted for *nyako*. Correspondingly, each wife is *nyako ot*, signifying that she is head of the household, proprietress of its hut and all other effects, and leader of its domestic and economic activities. The word *nyako* is usually translated as 'father', and is in fact the classificatory term for all agnates of the generation senior to the speaker, including the 'genitor'. But its use with reference to all married women,

[1] See Gluckman in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, ed. Radcliffe-Brown and Forde. The Luo family has a 'house-property complex' of the Zulu type but in a less extreme form.

[2] This is often striking in detail. The husband's most valuable possessions are also kept there. With the present changes in hut design the chief wife's hut is often of the new and more permanent rectangular pattern, while a second wife's may also be rectangular but smaller, and the third wife's still of the traditional circular type.